



December 11, 2008

To: Ms. Louise Robinson  
Obama Transition Team on Criminal Justice DOJ

Subject: National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice, Issues of Concern

Attention: Ms. Elizabeth Pyke

### **Introduction and Background**

Thank you for inviting me to participate in the meeting on December 8, 2008 to discuss important issues that we believe should be Criminal Justice priorities for the Obama Administration and are major concerns to the National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice (NABCJ).

As a matter of background, I currently serve as the President of NABCJ and have more than twenty-eight years of service with the United States Department of Justice. I have served as Assistant and Regional Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP). Prior to my retirement in 2001, I was the Warden at four Federal Prisons including U.S.P. Leavenworth and Atlanta and was appointed United States Marshal for the District of Columbia.

When NABCJ was established in 1974, one of the founding members was the first African American Director of State Corrections, Dr. Bennett Cooper of Ohio. Since NABCJ's inception our Organization has comprised Criminal Justice professionals that include, Corrections Directors, Administrators, Line Staff, Peace Officers, Judges, Lawyers, Probation and Parole Officials, Students and Educators.

We are a multi-ethnic, nonpartisan and nonprofit organization that works closely with Legislators, Community Leaders, Criminal Justice Agency Heads and Educators to highlight Criminal Justice issues and find solutions to problems that impact the African American communities and other minorities.



## **Criminal Justice Issues of Concern**

- 1.) Disproportionate Minority Contact/Confinement (DMC): Disproportionate Minority Confinement is a major issue. At this time, we have the highest incarceration rate of any county in the world and minorities (juvenile and adult) are over represented in our jails and prisons. In terms of adults, in 2006 there were 2, 258,983 offenders confined in federal and state prisons and local jails. The incarceration rate of white males was 487 per 100,000. The rate of Hispanic males was 1,261 per 100,000. The rate of Black males was more than six times higher than white males at 3,043 per 100,000. There is differential treatment in arrest, sentencing and confinement of minorities. The role of discriminatory practices must be identified and resolved and solutions adopted.
- 2.) Alternative Sentencing/Judicial Discretion: Judicial discretion must be more widely utilized for low risk and nonviolent offenders. Probation, community service, electronic monitoring and other alternatives to long term prison confinement are options available to judges and should be chosen in cases where there are opportunities to return low risk offenders to the community as productive citizens.
- 3.) Crime Prevention: Adopting schools, mentoring young adults in high risk communities and rewarding success in academics through scholarships, as well as teacher incentives are initiatives that should be pursued and funded. Funding substance abuse programs and community outreach activities are important in crime prevention.
- 4.) Criminal Justice Directors and Administrators Diversity: In most federal and state prison populations African Americans and Hispanics represent more than 60% of those confined. The Department of Justice should continue to take a leadership role by setting an example for diversity in the workplace. Directors and Administrators in the Criminal Justice Field should reflect the diversity of the clients that they supervise and provide a service to.
- 5.) Second Chance Act/Reentry: NABCJ supports the full implementation of the Second Chance Act to include the appropriate funding levels for programs that help newly released offenders find jobs, housing, drug treatment and mental health services, as well as those dealing with correctional reform, new and innovative programs to improve reentry services, mentoring and administration of justice reform with the goal of reducing the prison population and recidivism of offenders.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to have NABCJ participate in this very important meeting with the Obama DOJ Transition Team and present our views on critical issues impacting our communities. We believe the Criminal Justice issues we have highlighted require priority



attention by the new Administration. We also offer the services of NABCJ at additional meetings and in the recruitment and vetting of potential candidates for Criminal Justice positions.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Matthews  
President  
National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice